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AUTHOR Lawson, Harold L.; Skaggs, Edward C.
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ABSTRACT

Keeping debate communicative is a great and recurring concern. A study investigated whether debate format may influence debaters' communicative behavior, by comparing behavior in Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) Lincoln-Douglas debate (LD) and in CEDA Team debate. Videotapes of the two first affirmative speeches of each, at the semi-final level at the same tournament, were transcribed and examined for quantity of evidence, pieces of evidence per minute, use of complete citations, and speaking rate.. Results showed that: (1) the Team debater used 21 pieces of evidence, and the LD debater used 17, suggesting that both used their skills not to design a rhetorical masterpiece but to cram as much evidence as possible into their product; and (2) none of the four debaters qualified their evidence, with 94.3% of the evidence having no probative value or impact because its credibility could not be ascertained. Further, while Team debaters showed a definite tendency to speak more rapidly than the LD debaters, three of the four debaters (whether Team or LD) either grossly exceeded or were close to the average rates once deemed "incomprehensible" by CEDA's founders, and only the negative LD debater was clearly within the "safe zone" of delivery standards. It is notable that in both of the debates studied, the affirmative speakers--those who talked the fastest and read the greatest quantity of incompletely documented evidence--won their round. (Contains 16 references.) (SR)

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A Comparative Analysis of Communicative Behavior in CEDA Lincoln-Douglas Debate and CEDA Team Debate

Harold L. Lawson and Edward C. Skaggs

Department of Communication

Central Missouri State University

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Running Head: LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE

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A Comparative Analysis of Communicative Behavior in
CEDA Lincoln-Douglas Debate and CEDA Team Debate

Some two decades ago SCEDA (later CEDA) broke-off from NDT debate as a response to what many coaches and debaters believed to be undesirable and non-communicative practices taking place in NDT. These practices included, among others, excessively rapid delivery, missing or inappropriate non-verbal support, substitution of evidence for argument, excessive use of generic arguments, excessive reliance on jargon, inadequate citation of evidence and rudeness. Presently, CEDA debate is being criticized for many of the same alleged abuses. Some maintain that current practices are not meeting the objectives originally outlined by CEDA (Jensen & Preston, 1991). Additionally, while there are those who still favor value debate (Carroll & Harris, 1993; Boggs, 1987), others prefer policy debate (Carroll & Harris, 1993; Morello & Soenksen, 1989), and some believe that a diversity of experience with value and policy offers the greatest educational benefits (Derryberry, 1984, Gross, 1984).

The great and recurring concern in the literature however, deals with a desire to keep debate communicative. This desire has led to many new philosophies and organizations. The American Debate Association has accepted a rules-based approach to policy debate in hopes of creating change. The American Parliamentary Debate Association with its impromptu style team debate is certainly communicative but some might feel it neglects other positive benefits traditionally associated with debate such as research and deep involvement with a topic for a period of time. Some have turned to new forms of CEDA as possible answers. These

forms include "Public Argument," "Officiated Debate," and even what might be termed a "Tournament Philosophy" approach. All three of these approaches assume that debate is a communicative activity that should help students learn to relate ideas in a public forum. Public Argument appears to be growing in popularity, especially in the Southeast. Officiated Debate uses a moderator to enforce its' rules (Adams & Cox, 1993). The "Tournament Philosophy" approach allows teams to read a philosophy statement that is printed in the tournament invitation. The tournament director spells out the philosophy and asks that those who have similar feelings about the debate activity participate in the tournament. For example the invitation to Louisiana Tech's 1993 "Let Novak Speak" tournament states,

> "This tournament is designed to create an environment that encourages and rewards debaters whose stylistic and analytical approach to the activity is expressed as communication behavior that would be rewarded in other public forums. We welcome all debaters and judges who seek such an environment. Debaters are encouraged and expected to eschew such practices as abusiveness (physical or verbal, regardless to whom it is directed), purposeful distortion or misrepresentation of evidence or arguments, time-compressed/inarticulate speech, and "weirdness" (which is not a synonym for "creativity" or "originality) as a criterion in argument selection. Judges are encouraged and expected to apply negative sanctions to those debaters who engage in such practices" (Norwig and Doss, 1993, p. 5).

There are advocates for other approaches as well. Ulrich offers the idea of the judge as a referee intervening to tell the debaters if s/he perceives abuses (1985). Lawson, although philosophically supportive of Ulrich's approach, feels that there are inherent barriers to its implementation and advocates the use of lay judges to reduce the problems associated with rate and to encourage students to use less debate jargon in hopes that students might become communicative in language as well as rate (in press). At least one tournament attempts to combine a brief philosophy statement with the use of lay judges: The invitation to Louisiana State Shreveport's 1994 "Red River Forensics Classic" tournament advises potential participants that,

> "LSU-S wants to emphasize **public speaking skills** in the debate arena. Contestants will face a pool of judges from professional, though non-debate, areas and will be expected to adjust their speaking styles accordingly.....Open rounds will have lay judges" (Jarzabek, 1993).

Recently, there has been growing interest in Lincoln-Douglas debate. CEDA-LD participation appears to be growing as does the popularity of NFA-LD. Some coaches tell us that they choose the Lincoln-Douglas format because of the belief that, in LD, one can still be communicative and win. The National Forensic Association implemented its policy format for Lincoln-Douglas debate in 1990 and made it a permanent part of the national tournament in 1991 (Carroll & Harris, 1993). NFA-LD uses a rule-based approach to attempt to keep the rate of delivery used by the debaters at a more communicative level, while CEDA-LD is much more

like its team counterpart. Without rules some feel that CEDA-LD could possibly be subject to the same problems as Team CEDA.

While some comparisons have been made between CEDA and NDT debate (Colbert, 1991), few, if any, formal comparisons have been made between CEDA-LD and CEDA Team debate. We decided to make such an objective comparison in hopes of generating additional inquiry into the differences between CEDA-LD, CEDA Team, and other debate formats.

Method for An Objective Comparison

Originally we had planned a rather grandiose study. It was our intention to compare CEDA-LD debate not only with CEDA Team debate, but also with CEDA Novice Team and, possibly, with NFA-LD. We planned to conduct a pilot study at our own "Show-Me Classic" tournament and conduct extensive research at subsequent tournaments. We made video tapes for the pilot study at our tournament. Unfortunately, we were frustrated by "close-outs" in some of our elimination rounds, as well as by some equipment problems and person-power shortages. We ended up with a good tape of an open division CEDA Team debate and a good tape of a CEDA-LD debate, both at the semi-final level.

Subsequently, Murphy's law intervened. Both of your authors were sidetracked by other personal and professional commitments and problems. By the time we were able to return to this project, it was second semester, and the time for grandiose inquiry was past. We narrowed our project to an analysis of the tapes we had.

Have you ever attempted to make a transcript from a videotape of a

modern debate? Both our hats are off to those who make such transcripts. We kept no count of the number of hours which we and others invested in those tapes, but there were many. If we pursue a similar study in the future, it will be with ample time and qualified secretarial support (someone who takes dictation in English and jargon at 300 words per minute would be nice).

For years when people think "speed" in debate, they tend to pick the first affirmative rebuttal as a speech appropriate for analysis. To our way of thinking, the first affirmative rebuttalist frequently has more excuse than other speakers for speed and, perhaps, for other communicative abuses as well. Generally speaking, s/he can be subjected to intense time pressures. There is one speech, however, which has no excuse for poor communication. That speech is the first affirmative constructive. We agree with Freely (1993) that

> "Those portions of the speech that are under the advocate's complete control-that is, where there is little or no need or opportunity for adaptation-must reflect the maximum skill in speech composition. The first affirmative speech, for example, provides the greatest opportunity for advocates to say precisely what they want to say in precisely the way they want to say it and to deliver their carefully chosen words with maximum effectiveness. The well-planned first affirmative speech is a masterpiece of composition and delivery. The issues, the contentions, the transitions, the analysis, the evidence, and the summaries should be polished to perfection so that they will be recorded on the judge's flow sheet-or lodged in the

minds of the audience-precisely as the speaker wants them to be. The well-written and well-delivered first affirmative speech is a graceful, forceful, highly literate, lucid, cogent statement that should be a powerful factor in advancing the affirmative's case" (p. 308).

We decided, then, to study and compare the two first affirmative speeches -- CEDA Team and CEDA-LD, both at the semi-final level and both at the same tournament utilizing the topic "that the national news media in the United States impairs the public's understanding of political issues," to see which, if either was a "masterpiece of composition and delivery."

It is also a fairly common belief that negative tactics originally were, and usually are, a cause for communicative abuses in debate. The negative attempts to "spread" the affirmative and the poor affirmative, in self-defense, must resort to non-communicative techniques in order to survive. We decided to test that assumption by analyzing the first negative speeches presented in response to the affirmative cases.

To enhance objectivity, we attempted to limit our analysis to quantifiable phenomena. Specifically, we asked and answered the following questions, which we considered to be pertinent to criticism frequently levied at debate:

1. What quantity of evidence was used?
2. How many pieces of evidence per minute were used?
3. Were "complete" citations used? and
4. What speaking rate was used?

We recognize, of course, that merely using "a lot" of evidence and/or speaking "very fast" is not automatically a communicative abuse. Incomprehensibility is more (or less) than mere speed, and bad argumentation is more (or less) than reading lots of evidence. Further, we recognize that our sample is too small for meaningful rigorous statistical analysis and certainly to small to be generalizeable to debate in general (heaven forbid we should commit a "hasty-g" -- that might be even worse than non-intrinsicality). Nonetheless, the results are interesting - and tend to support some of the criticisms so frequently voiced.

Quantity of Evidence

The first affirmative speaker in the team debate used 21 pieces of evidence, an average of 2.62 pieces per minute. The first affirmative speaker in LD debate used 17 pieces of evidence, an average of 2.93 pieces per minute. We offer no argument as to the "proper" quantity of evidence. We do suggest, however, that any belief that CEDA-LD debate uses more non-evidentiary persuasion than does CEDA Team debate is not supported by the statistics on these two speeches.

It might be noted that these speakers have quite a bit in common. Both have been fairly successful in their respective types of debate. Both have been criticized by some coaches for "speed" and "too much evidence - not enough analysis." Obviously such "hearsay" comment is not included for any probative value and it is not included as a criticism of the two debaters. They are both winners in the current game of debate. We merely suggest that, while we have an insufficient sample to prove "typicality"

(not to mention topicality) we have little reason to believe that these two debaters are "atypical."

A comparison of the negative speakers' use of evidence to that of the affirmative speakers is interesting. The affirmative team speaker used 21 (2.62 per minute). The first negative responded with 13 (1.93 per minute). The affirmative LD speaker used 17 (2.93 per minute). The negative responded with 8 (1.14 per minute).

At the risk of injecting speculation into objective data, the negative LD speaker may have used considerably less evidence than s/he would normally use. It is fairly clear from the tape that the LD affirmative used an "unusual" approach and the negative simply had no pertinent evidence. It is, of course, also possible that the negative speaker, by choice, prefers analysis to quantities of evidence even when s/he has the evidence. Our research cannot answer that question.

In any case, the data obtained suggests that at least in our limited sample, the affirmative speakers in both Team and LD debate relied more heavily on evidence than did their negative counterparts. The affirmative speakers used a total of 38 pieces of evidence (2.71 per minute) while the negative used only 21 (1.4 pieces per minute). The difference is, of course, influenced heavily by the LD negative speech which may as speculated above, be atypical.

On our limited sample, no convincing conclusion can be drawn. It could be, for example, that coincidence placed two first affirmative speakers who rely heavily on evidence against two first negative speakers who do not. It may also be that, in general, modern debaters who have the

freedom to work on and perfect a first affirmative speech use their skills not to design a rhetorical masterpiece but to cram as much evidence as possible into their product. Our visceral belief, based on our own coaching experiences, tends in this direction.

In comparing the two Team debaters to the two LD debaters one finds that the Team debaters used 32 pieces of evidence (2.275 per minute) and the two LD debaters used 25 (1.535 per minute). Standing alone, this data would suggest a relatively heavy reliance on evidence by the team debaters. Although objectively valid, we find this interpretation of the data unpersuasive. Remember that the LD affirmative used more evidence per minute than any other speaker in the round and that the negative LD debater appeared to be caught with no "on-case" evidence.

Adequacy of Evidence Citations

We are of the opinion (although our debaters frequently disagree with us, in both theory and practice) that evidence has no probative value or impact unless the credibility of the source can be ascertained. Hence, "Jones in '93" adds nothing. The debater might as well assert the point on his/her own authority.

In preparing this paper, then, we were looking for "complete citations" at least the first time a source was introduced. By "complete citation" we mean <u>something</u> sufficient to add <u>some</u> credibility, hence some probative value or impact to the evidence. "Jones in '93" would not do. "Jones, Ohio State Professor of Journalism, in '93" would be acceptable. "Jones, in his '93 book, <u>The Ethics of the Media</u>," would be

acceptable. "Dr. Alfred Jones, Ohio State Professor of Journalism, in his 1993 book, The Ethics of the Media," would be great.

The affirmative Team debater presented 21 pieces of evidence and gave zero complete citations. The affirmative LD debater used 17 pieces of evidence and gave 4 complete citations. Unfortunately, all 4 related to definitions of terms, where we accepted as "complete citation" something like "Webster's Dictionary in 1988." The negative team debater used 13 pieces of evidence, of which, for some reason, 2 were given with complete citations. The negative LD speaker used 8 pieces of evidence, 3 with complete citations. Of those 3, two were of the dictionary type and one was a debate coach on a point of theory.

Ignoring the 6 "dictionary" citations and counting the debate coach and the other 2 complete citations, the four speakers analyzed presented 53 pieces of evidence with only 3 complete citations. Some 94.3 percent of the evidence presented, then, would have no probative value or impact according to our view.

The data obtained in our limited sample obviously would not support any belief that CEDA LD debaters use evidence or evidence credibility more effectively than do CEDA Team debaters or vice versa. The data would only support the sad implication (at least we consider it sad) that none of the four debaters included see any need to qualify evidence. Over 94.3 percent of the evidence was presented in the "Jones in '93" manner.

If this fact saddens you - as it does us - let us not be too quick to point the finger at the debaters. We coach them and we judge them. The debaters in this study are all winners in modern day debate. Our ballots

are the determiners as to what rhetorical techniques win and what techniques do not.

Speaking Rate

In 1968, the average speaking rate in the final round of NDT was about 200 words per minute (Colbert, 1991, p. 88; Colbert, 1981, p. 74). By the mid 1970's, the rate may have approximated 245 words per minute (Colbert, 1991, p. 88; Rives, 1976, p. 47). By 1980 the rate had increased to about 270 words per minute, and finally, by 1985, seemed to level off at about 300 words per minute (Colbert, 1991, p. 88).

SCEDA, later CEDA broke off from NDT in the early 1970's, ostensibly, among other things because NDT was perpetuating an "incomprehensible" rate of delivery (Howe, 1972, Hollihan, Riley & Austin, 1983, and Colbert, 1991, p. 88). The great split occurred at a time, then, when NDT finalists were averaging somewhere between 200 and 250 words per minute.

Colbert's later study of CEDA finalists reveals an average of 237 words per minute (1991, p. 90). It would appear, then, that modern CEDA champions are well into the range deemed "incomprehensible" by the founders of CEDA.

The data in our own study indicates that the affirmative Team debater spoke at a rate of 261 words per minute. This substantially exceeds Colbert's findings for CEDA finalists. For all finalists he found a rate of 237 words per minute. For first affirmative constructive speakers the rate was 212 words per minute. In point of fact the affirmative Team

debater in our study was on par with NDT first affirmative finalists who averaged 260 words per minute (Colbert, 1991, p. 90).

Our negative Team debater averaged 217 words per minute. S/he spoke somewhat slower than the average of 225 words per minute computed by Colbert for first negative constructive CEDA finalists (1991, p. 90). The 217 words per minute is, however, probably close, based on such data as we have to the average speaking rate of the late 1960's/early 1970's NDT debaters who disillusioned CEDA's founders.

Our LD debaters did show what we would consider a significantly slower speaking rate, particularly when compared to the affirmative Team debater. The affirmative LD debater spoke at 196 words per minute. This would be comparable to the average of 200 words per minute for 1968 NDT finalists. Please remember that this debater, although very successful in LD, frequently received negative comments on ballots and some losses based on alleged "excessive speed" and "incomprehensibility." We are familiar with this debater's history because s/he happened to be one of ours. In this debater's case, rate was not the sole problem - there was a certain apparent disdain for the non-verbals needed to facilitate rapid speaking. Like many modern debaters s/he had a fine mind but seemed to attach little importance, despite our urging, to presentational skills.

Our negative LD debater clearly wins the prize for slow rate of delivery at 170 words per minute. Whether this rate was partially attributable to his/her lack of evidence on the affirmative case we cannot say. We can say -subjectively- that s/he was pleasant to listen to - a welcome change. One wanted to vote for him/her - which does not, of

course, mean that one would do so - there is always the silly flow sheet to consider.

Conclusions

Recognizing the lack of generalizability inherent in our limited sample, the following conclusions seem warranted:

1. Modern CEDA debaters, whether in LD or team, do not necessarily strive to produce a first affirmative speech which is a persuasive masterpiece in the traditional sense. In our sample, both affirmative speakers spoke significantly more rapidly and read significantly more evidence than their negative counterparts.

2. Overall, the two Team debaters read more evidence per minute than the two LD debaters. One LD debater, however, read more evidence per minute than either Team debater.

3. None of the four debaters made any significant effort to qualify evidence used. Excluding dictionary references, 94.3 percent of the evidence used was introduced in the "Jones in '93" scenario.

4. The Team debaters showed a definite tendency to speak more rapidly than the LD debaters. The affirmative team debater grossly exceeded the average rates once deemed "incomprehensible" by CEDA's founders. The negative team debater was on a pace with the allegedly "incomprehensible" rates and the affirmative LD speaker was probably close to them. Only the negative LD speaker, at 170 words per minute, was clearly within the "safe zone" in terms of CEDA's original implied rate of delivery standards.

Final Thoughts

In both of the debates studied, the affirmative speakers - those who talked the fastest and read the greatest quantity of incompletely documented evidence - won their round. Your authors choose not to draw any conclusion(s) from this fact - or, at least, choose not to publish any conclusion(s) which they may have drawn. You may draw any conclusion(s) which you wish.

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